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JAMAICAN FOLK MUSIC IN THE CLASSROOM

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Abstract

This thesis compromises a brief overview of Jamaican folk music and a unit of study for fourth or fifth grade general music that gives students the opportunity to explore the unique musical and cultural traditions of Jamaica. Students will be exposed to different traditional rhythms and folk songs whilst improving their basic musicianship skills. Students will have a chance to explore this culture, which may seem foreign or unfamiliar to them.

Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to provide the reader with an introduction to Jamaican music, and resources for sharing it with their elementary school students. Since teaching in Jamaica for three weeks in 2013, I have had a love of their fascinating culture, particularly how music is an integral part of daily life. I had the pleasure to teach at a very rural school for one week. During this time, I learned how music appears throughout their school day. We would teach Jamaican drumming to them and in turn they would teach us the different dances. In this thesis, I am trying to give the reader a sense of the traditions and unique traits of Jamaican culture and organize it in a way that our American general music students can understand.

An Introduction to Jamaica and Its Folk Music

Jamaican history has been grossly influenced by the history of slavery. The British captured Jamaica in 1645 from the Spanish, who had enslaved, and largely exterminated, the native Taino Indians. The Spanish had also imported many West African slaves. Upon British capture, the Royal Africa Company, which was a slave-trading enterprise, was formed and used Jamaica as source of slaves and its chief marketplace. The island became the slave trading capital of the West Indies. It wasn't until 1834 when the slaves were emancipated, that Jamaicans were able to regain their country and culture back. Unfortunately, the period following emancipation wasn't a positive time for Jamaicans, since sugar prices fell, throwing the Jamaican economy into a downward spiral. Throughout the next 100 years, Jamaica suffered under the rule of leaders that continued to destroy the country. Jamaica became, again, a colony of the Crown in 1866, allowing the country to have some stability into the 20th century. Unfortunately, this meant that Jamaicans lost their power to make decisions or engage in self-determination. During this time, Jamaica moved closer and closer to becoming their own independent country, winning limited self government in 1944. Independence wasn't won in Jamaica until 1962. A new prime minister named Bustamante helped revive Jamaica and its economy. (Kastle)

Today, more than ninety percent of Jamaicans are of African descent with some sort of connection to the slave trade. Jamaican culture and music have many connections to Africa, but the overwhelming majority of research on Jamaican music

has focused on reggae, ska, and other styles that drew international attention beginning in the 1960s. Information on Jamaican folk music of earlier eras is much more limited. Jamaican folk music can be broken into three main areas according to its function (Lewin, 1976). These three categories are: ritual and ceremonial music, work and social music and recreational music (Lewin, 1976). As in other cultures, ritual and ceremonial music is used in the devotions and practices of a religion or cult. Work and social music is accompanies everyday activities and significant occasions such as birth, death and marriage.

Ritual and Ceremonial Music

Pukko and Zino are both revival cults that have ties to Christianity and indigenous Western African traditions. Hundreds of songs have some sort of reference to Christianity and are usually performed around a table. Jamaicans were first exposed to Christianity during the time of slavery. Their Christian owners would often force their religion onto slaves, and then work songs would be born from religious songs. These sparked a spiritual vitality that would give them hope. This emotion is seen in a vast number of their traditional hymns. This following example gives us a sense that they are waiting to get to back to their motherland.

G D Em G D Em

Af-ri-ca, u-nite, 'cause we're

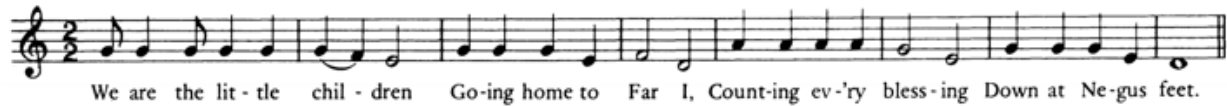
C D Em C D Em

mov-ing right out of Bab-y-lon, and we're go-ing to our fath-er's land.

(Marley, 1979)

A common characteristic of these songs is that there is always a improvisatory characteristic to them. There will be sections that repeat that allow the performers to create variations on the spot. Jamaican music is known for its group improvisation where singers continue to stack harmonies on top of each other to create elaborate pieces.

Pukko music involves simple tunes that are in duple or quadruple meter. Zion are a little more complicated, and are sometimes in triple or compound duple meters. Percussion instruments are used for street meetings and Zion services. Pukko music has a basis of clapping, stamping and body percussion. (Lewin, 1979, 40)



Gumbay is another cult, which stems from Western Africa. Although much less followed than other cults, it is still practiced using drumming, singing and dancing. Its main goal is to counteract the work of evil spirits.(p.43) Many similarities to Gumbay music can be seen in Western African traditional religious music. The histories of the Gumbay traditions have continued down family lines to maintain these similarities.(Lewin, 1979, 43)

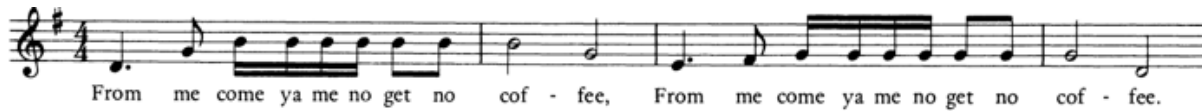
Work and Social Music

Social songs from Jamaica usually have some function in various stages of life. (Lewin, 1979, p.43), such as birth, death, marriage, and other life passages. These songs are full of improvisation and allusions and usually have a typical Jamaican spin to them, creating unique song patterns full of expression and creativity. Songs talk about death in a positive way, as it will relieve the person of their terrible life and will bring them to better things. This first example is a song that takes a more serious approach by asking for this higher power to guide them.



(Lewin, 1979, p.43)

This next song seems to be joking with this higher power asking whether or not this higher power is going to “get” them.



(Lewin, 1979, p.43)

Work songs came from the need for slaves to communicate with each other. Talking was prohibited, but workers figured out that they could chant to each other to communicate. This work song is an example of someone digging for something outside:



(Lewin, 1979, p.44)

This next example is a work song to accompany someone scrubbing floors:



(Lewin, 1979, p.44)

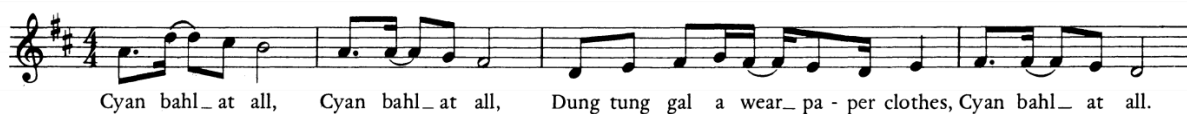
The way these songs were performed were according to the nature of the work.(p.44) One man would be the lead, while the others would sing the chorus. The leader would improvise different words and melodies to keep the song exciting and interesting for the other workers.

Recreational Music

During the days of slavery, recreational music was almost nonexistent (Lewin, 1979, 45). Jonkunnu music has a very interesting history. This music was very closely

associated with a break slaves were given. During Christmas time, slaves were given a three day break to celebrate the holiday. During this time, slaves would take the time to sing, dance and drum in ways that would mock their owners. It is still a common tradition for this to take place during Christmas time, as it has become a tradition associated for generations with this time of the year. The example of the song below is of a young lady that had poorly made clothes that fell off on a bus trip. The song is written in an almost joking style as it was so common for so many people to have poorly made clothes, which was seen as a representation of their sub par lifestyles.

Figure 14. Cyan Bahl



Jamaican Drumming

The drum is perhaps the oldest instrument in the world and has had its place in societies across the world. Africa has an unprecedented love for the instrument with so many different variations of drums and innumerable rhythmic sounds. When slaves were brought to Jamaica, they also came with a rich culture of music and drumming. Jamaica is said to have many of the same natural resources as the Jamaican's home continent of Africa. Jamaicans use over 25 types of drums but usually only four types with their music. Jamaicans use the bass drum, djembe, fundeh and keteh. Each have different sounds to them and range in size. They are all made out of the same skin and have their own unique shape. (Barrett, 26) Each has its own job in reggae music. The Fundeh and Djembe drums are the "lifeline" of the circle whilst improvising and keeping

things interesting. The bass drum keeps a steady ostinato of different rhythms to maintain the direction of the beat. The Rasta drum is a very small, high pitched drum and can be played at a rapid rate to give the circle a more complex sound. Drum circles, called Nyabinghi circles, have a long history in Jamaica and date back to when Jamaica prisoners were released from prison and were welcomed back to their community with a type of drumming called “Burra Drumming”. There are many different drum patterns that can be heard in a Nyabinghi circle. Here are some examples of some of these rhythms.

The Fundeh drum is known as the heartbeat of the drum circle. With a pulse of steady, continuous, eighth notes, the Fundeh acts as the basis or heart of the circle. The bass drum also assists in keeping this steady beat on 1 and 3. The rest of this example are different suggested variations but do not limit the players to only this. As it has a improvisatory basis to it, players can create their own patterns to expand on the drum circle. (Burnet, 1982)

Nyabinghi

The image displays musical notation for Nyabinghi drum patterns. It consists of eight staves, each representing a different drum. The first staff is labeled 'Fundeh' and shows a steady eighth-note pulse. The second staff is labeled 'Bass' and shows a steady eighth-note pulse. The third staff is labeled 'Kete 1' and shows a pattern of eighth notes with accents. The fourth staff is labeled 'Var 2' and shows a pattern of eighth notes with accents. The fifth staff is labeled 'Var 3' and shows a pattern of eighth notes with accents. The sixth staff is labeled 'Var 4' and shows a pattern of eighth notes with accents. The seventh staff is labeled 'Var 5' and shows a pattern of eighth notes with accents. The eighth staff is labeled 'Var 6' and shows a pattern of eighth notes with accents.

(Wills, 2013)

Conclusion

As you can see, different types of heritage and musical history have a very important role in the country of Jamaica. Whether it is music derived from Western African traditions, or music created during the slave era, all of it has some direct impact of the culture and music of today. It is important to incorporate this rich history when teaching music. It is common in a general music setting to only teach the specific music associated with a culture without teaching the meaning behind that type of music.

Unit Plan

Objective:

The objectives of this unit is to have students not only experience Jamaican music, but to also learn a little of the history and culture behind it. Students will have the opportunity to sing songs in all three styles previously discussed, and learn drum patterns that are associated with different tribal histories from areas throughout Jamaica. Students will learn notated versions of folksongs, but will also be expected to improvise. This use of improvisation is used far less in our elementary general music classroom, and this unit will allow students to experiment with the use of this important tool. Not only will encourage students to use creativity In music, it will also allow them to explore other cultures and to compare them to their own culture(s).

Prior Knowledge:

Students' prior background in elementary general music curriculum should give them the necessary tools. Students will have mastered reading quarter, eighth and sixteenth notes and rests by the time they enter 4th grade. They will use this knowledge to read and learn complex rhythms that are found in Jamaican music. Students will also use their prior exposure to the call and response method of song learning, and songs in this style.

National Standards for Music Education addressed in this unit (NAfME) 2014

MU:Cr1.1.5a Improvise rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic ideas, and explain connection to specific purpose and context (such as social, cultural, and historical).

MU:Cr2.1.5a Demonstrate selected and developed musical ideas for improvisations, arrangements, or compositions to express intent, and explain connection to purpose and context.

MU:Cr3.1.5a Evaluate, refine, and document revisions to personal music, applying teacher provided and collaboratively developed criteria and feedback, and explain rationale for changes.

MU:Pr4.1.5a

Demonstrate and explain how the selection of music to perform is influenced by personal interest, knowledge, and context, as well as their personal and others' technical skill.

MU:Pr4.2.5c Explain how context (such as social, cultural, and historical) informs performances.

MU:Pr5.1.5a Apply teacher-provided and established criteria and feedback to evaluate the accuracy and expressiveness of ensemble and personal performances.

MU:Pr6.1.5a Perform music, alone or with others, with expression, technical accuracy, and appropriate interpretation.

MU:Re9.1.5a Evaluate musical works and performances, applying established criteria, and explain appropriateness to the context, citing evidence from the elements of music.

MU:Cn11.0.5a Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.

MU:Cr1.1.5a Improvise rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic ideas, and explain connection to specific purpose and context (such as social, cultural, and historical).

Differentiation

Differentiation is a technique that ensures all students' needs are met in the classroom.

This unit is such that can be mastered by all students. All lessons have flexibility that can allow a teacher to make the necessary adjustments for a student with a specific IEP/504 plan. Many of the rhythms and lyrics to Jamaican songs can be difficult for any student as they are foreign to their general music background. It is likely that many students will have struggle to fully master much of the information the first time through.

It will be important for the teacher to be repetitive during the lesson to help those students that may be struggling.

Lesson #1

Objectives

- Students will begin learning traditional Jamaican songs
- Students will find similarities between Jamaican folk songs to songs they have heard in their general music classroom.
- Students will be exposed to Jamaican drumming for the first time and will get to discuss what they see and hear.
- Students will practice keeping a steady beat and get to experience some traditional rhythms that they will be using later on in the unit.

Materials

- Promethean Board & Speakers
- Djembe drum
- Copies of “Jamaica, Land We Love”
- You Tube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eNBPniDJSFM>

Vocabulary

- National Anthem
- Rasta
- Nyabinghi
- Heartbeat

Learning Activities-

Introduction:

- Students will begin the lesson by listening to “Jamaica, Land We Love” on YouTube. Students will then listen to the “Star Spangled Banner”.
- Students will use their white board to write down two similarities and differences between the two national anthems. Students will have a time to turn and talk to each other to compare their findings. Students will then have a chance to share out loud the similarities and differences between the two national anthems that they may have found with their neighbor.

Middle:

- Students will learn the national anthem in a call and response style with the teacher.

- Once mastered, students will receive a paper copy of the national anthem and will be asked to analyze the rhythms. Students will observe the different rhythms and will be asked to recall their names and length of time.
- Students will sing the Jamaican national anthem using Gordan rhythmic syllables
- Students will then watch “Rasta Medley- Nyabinghi Drumming” on YouTube.
- Students will be introduced to the different variations seen in Nyabinghi drumming, as found on page 9.
- Students will practice the heartbeat using their hands and legs while the teacher introduces the idea of improvisation. The teacher will start playing different rhythmic patterns from the Nyabinghi drumming resource that line up with the heartbeat. Students will begin

Closure:

- Students are invited to experiment with improvising over the heartbeat in order to line up.
- Students will complete a 321 exit slip (included in the appendix). The 321 exit slip is a quick response that students can give based on the lesson. They list 3 things they have learned, 2 questions they have, and 1 opinion they have. This will be a quick way for us to communicate on whether or not they are absorbing the information from the lesson.

Assessment

Teacher will observe students’ performance of the Jamaican National Anthem and assess informally to ensure students have memorized the melody and lyrics. As part of the exit slip, students will review musical similarities and differences between the American and Jamaican anthems. In the next class, students will be asked to recall and apply information from the video and demonstration of drumming.

Lesson #2

Objectives

Students begin to learn Jamaican folk songs and their context in history. Students will also begin playing the drum and singing at the same time. Students will continue to have a chance to improvise with their classmates. Students will also have to master keeping a steady beat known as the “heartbeat” while they are performing.

Materials

- Class set of Djembes
- Promethean Board & Speakers

Vocabulary

- Djembe
- Rastafarianism
- Jamaican “Heartbeat”

Learning Activities-

Introduction:

- Students will review the Jamaican National Anthem.
- Students will also review the heartbeat pattern and will take a few minutes to practice improvising over it.
- Students will learn about Rastafarianism and how this musical cult writes songs about returning to their “promised land” of Ethiopia.

Middle:

- Students will learn the song “Wings of a Dove” which is a song suggesting the leaving of Jamaica to “fly away”.
- Students will then learn by rote one basic drum pattern from the Nyabingi patterns and will practice playing and singing at the same time.
- Once mastered, students will be encouraged to learn a different pattern and can experiment with how the patterns intertwine.

Closure:

- Students will close out the lesson with a fading heartbeat of the drums.
- Students will discuss why these people wanted to leave Jamaica during the time of slavery.
- Students will complete a 321 exit slip.

Assessment

Teacher will observe students’ ability to maintain a steady heartbeat throughout the improvised section. The class will be split into two groups; One group will maintain the heartbeat and the other group will have the chance to improvise. Groups will then switch so they all get a chance to participate in both sections. Teacher will also observe students’ ability to sing “wing of a dove” and drum at the same time. As this is a very hard skill to master, students will likely need further work on this skill. Students will

briefly fill out the 321 exit slip to address what they learned and what they still need help on.

Lesson #3

Objectives

Students will begin by reviewing the Nyabinghi patterns from the previous class. Students will then take these patterns and apply them to performance. Students will learn the melody to “Rivers of Babylon”. Students will then apply Nyabinghi drum patterns to this song and will play and sing at the same time.

Materials

- Class set of Djembe Drums
- Promethean Board

Vocabulary

Learning Activities-

Introduction:

- Students will begin the lesson by singing the Jamaican national anthem.
- Students will then review some of the Nyabinghi drum patterns in a call and response setting.

Middle:

- Students will learn “Rivers of Babylon” by rote. Students will practice singing the song a cappella and then will be accompanied by the teacher on Djembe.
- The teacher will continue to play different rhythmic patterns associated with Nyabinghi while students become more comfortable singing and hearing the drum.
- Students will then practice keeping a steady heartbeat as a recorded version of the song plays.
- Students will then sing the song while keeping a steady heartbeat pattern.
- Once this is mastered, students will be split into four groups and will have a chance to use improvised rhythms while the other three groups maintain the song and heartbeat.

Closure:

- Students will be able to view just the lyrics on the promethean board. Students will be asked to turn and talk to a neighbor about what the lyrics could mean.
- Students will be asked to share out what they decided the words mean.
- The teacher will play the “oh” section and students will be asked to include what it sounds like on their exit slip.

Assessment

Students will be informally assessed throughout the lesson. The teacher should ensure that all students have mastered both the song and the heartbeat before proceeding to the improvisation section. Students should be able to sing and play a few different patterns during this lesson. The teacher should take time to assess each student when the class is split into four groups. Students will fill out an exit slip to demonstrate knowledge and mastery of the lesson.

Lesson #4

Objectives

Students will learn the song “Go Down Emanuel Road” and learn a game that goes along with the song. Students will learn the history behind the song and why it was played. Next, students will master several drumming patterns and then begin to use improvisation in the drumming circle.

Materials

- Guitar/Piano
- Promethean Board
- Class Set of Djembe Drums

Vocabulary

- Kpanlogo
- Ashiko
- Bruckins
- Kumina
- Djembe

Learning Activities-

Introduction:

- Students will begin the lesson by singing the Jamaican National Anthem.
- Students will be asked a series of questions on improvisation and its relation to this type of drumming.
- Students will move into a seated circle in preparation for the song “Go Down Emanuel Road”. Students will learn the song by rote and then will play the game.
- Students sit in a circle on the ground and pass a stone around in a rhythmic fashion. During this time the class is singing the song as a chant. A student that gets tapped with the stone is out.

Middle:

- Students move into their drum circle and begin a quick review of the Nyabingi drum patters. The teacher will begin to improvise over their drumming patters.
- Students will play a series of drum patters from Kpanlogo, Ashiko, Bruckins and Kumina drumming styles to plant ideas of improvisation.
- Students will then be asked to keep the heartbeat going while each student has a chance to improvise over the entire class. Students should be encouraged to join a classmate in improvisation if they chose.

Closure:

- Students will turn and talk and compare their drumming patterns. Students will be given the opportunity to share out with the class on their partner’s patterns are and how they are different from their own.
- Students will sing “Go Down Emanuel Road” one more time so it is remembered for the next class.

Assessment

Students will be assessed on two sections. After learning “Go Down Emanuel Road”, students will be assessed on whether or not they are able to keep a steady beat with the rock. Students will also be assessed on how well they are able to improvise during the drumming section of the lesson and how well they can recover to return to the heartbeat.

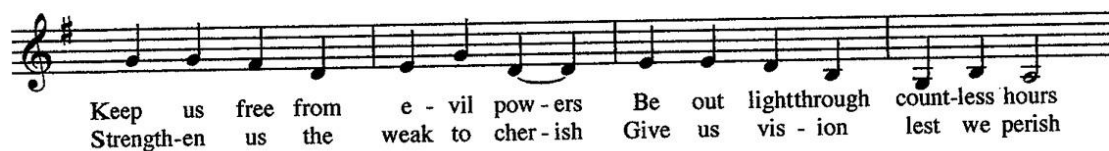
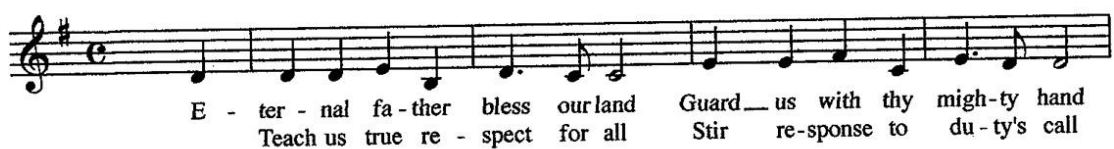
Unit Conclusion

Students are exposed to many different aspects of Jamaican music and culture throughout this unit. They get to sing traditional songs, drum using Jamaican infused rhythms and learn how they are applied to everyday culture. While students are singing these songs, they get to explore the full range of their voice which allows them to differentiate between their chest and head voices. Students are exposed to several different rhythms in both duple and triple meter. Not only will students be hearing these rhythms, they will also have the opportunity to play these rhythms. Students will be using skills they learn throughout this unit to become more confident in using improvisation. Students have several opportunities and will be encouraged to create their own sounds to the beat of the music. At the end of this unit, students will have a solid foundation of rhythms and songs to expand on in their future music education.

Jamaica, Land We Love

Hugh Braham Sherlock

Robert Charles Lightbourne





Wings Of A Dove

If I had the wings of a dove,
 If I had the wings of a dove,
 Well, I would fly, fly away, fly_ away_
 And be_ at rest.

If I had the wings of a dove,
 If I had the wings of a dove,
 Well, I would fly, fly away, fly_ away_
 And be_ at rest.

Oh, since I have no wings, since I have no wings, since I
 have no wings,
 I'm gonna sing, sing, sing,
 Since I have no wings, since I have no wings, since I have
 no wings,
 I'm gonna sing, sing, sing,

If I had the wings of a dove,
 If I had the wings of a dove,
 I would fly, fly away, fly_ away_
 And be_ at rest.

3-2-1 Opinion

3 Facts I learned:

1)

2)

3)

2 Questions I have:

1)

2)

I opinion I now have:

1)

Go Down Emanuel Road

Note - Go Down Emanuel Road is a popular Jamaican circle game, in which the players sit in a circle on the ground, and pass a stone around from player to player in a rhythmic fashion (on the beat). If a player's hand is hit by the stone, then they are out, and the person who hits their hand starts over. The person who hits another's hand with the stone (or stick) may also choose to change direction at any time during the game.

Go Dung Emanuel Road
(Galong buoy)

Fi guh bruk rock stone
(Galong buoy)

Go Dung Emanuel Road
(Galong buoy)

Fi guh bruk rock stone
(Galong buoy)

Bruk dem one-by-one
(Galong buoy)

Bruk dem two-by-two
(Galong buoy)

Bruk dem three-by-three
(Galong buoy)

Finga mash don't cry
(Galong buoy)

Member a play we a play
(Galong buoy)

(guitar chords - D/A D D/A D G/A D G/A D)

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